


OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER  
GOVERNOR



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LT. GOVERNOR

To: Department Directors and Elected Officials  
From: Brian Schweitzer, Governor   
Date: March 7, 2006  
Subject: State Employees Safety/Early Return to Work

During FY 2006, the State's Workers' Compensation premiums increased from \$12,700,000 to \$15,000,000, or approximately 18%. There are many reasons for the increase: the number of accidents, an aging work force, rising medical costs, and injured employees remaining off the job for longer periods of time.

We can do better! The safety of our workers and their workplaces must be a priority for every agency and supervisor. Accidents can be prevented. We can get injured workers back to work as quickly as possible in positions that are appropriate for their disabilities. We can reduce the high medical costs and wage loss compensation payments that drain tax dollars from much-needed services and programs.

The Montana Safety Culture Act, enacted in the early 1990's, required all Montana employers to implement safety programs to reduce accidents and mitigate rising claims costs. Please review that statute and your own agency's safety programs. Effective safety programs will save tax dollars, and more importantly, improve the lives and productivity of one of our state's greatest assets, our state workers.

The Departments of Administration, Labor & Industry, and the Montana State Fund have developed numerous resources to assist you in establishing and maintaining comprehensive and effective employee safety and early-return-to-work programs. They are:

- 1) The State Employee Safety Program model,  
<http://discoveringmontana.com/doa/rmtd/aboutus/publications/safetyprogrammodel.asp>.
- 2) Early-Return-to-Work guidelines with model policies, forms, and checklists to assist state agencies in developing alternative or modified positions for injured state workers  
<http://discoveringmontana.com/doa/rmtd/aboutus/publications/ertwguide.asp>.

In addition, these departments offer safety training, including defensive driving, back injury prevention, ergonomics, and OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) compliance training.

If you would like additional information, please contact Lane Kertamus, Vice President of Operations, Montana State Fund (Ext. 5993) or Brett Dahl, Administrator, Risk Management & Tort Defense Division (Ext. 3687).

Let's work together to make a difference!